

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

A 1 1. A method of providing customer service to a user of
2 the Internet, the method comprising the steps of:
3 receiving a message over the Internet
4 representing a request for a call from a customer service
5 representative; and
6 operating, in response to said received
7 message, calling equipment to establish a call between
8 said user and a customer service representative.

1 2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step
2 of:
3 assigning a customer service representative to
4 respond to said received message; and
5 transmitting a first telephone number
6 associated with said user and a second telephone number
7 associated with the assigned customer service
8 representative to said calling equipment.

1 3. The method of claim 2, wherein the message from said
2 user includes a telephone number which can be used to
3 call the user.

1 4. The method of claim 3, wherein the message from said
2 user further includes desired contact time information.

1 5. The method of claim 4, wherein the message from said
2 user further includes web page information.

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1 6. The method of claim 3, wherein the message from said
2 user further includes a business identifier.

1 7. The method of claim 6, wherein the message from said
2 user further includes customer service representative
3 information.

1 8. The method of claim 1, wherein said conference
2 equipment includes an intelligent peripheral device, and
3 wherein said step of operating calling
4 equipment includes:

5 operating the intelligent peripheral
6 device to initiate a first call to said user
7 using the first telephone number;

8 operating the intelligent peripheral
9 device to initiate a second call to said
10 customer service representative using the
11 second telephone number; and

12 operating the intelligent peripheral
13 device to bridge the first and second calls.

1 9. The method of claim 1,
2 wherein said calling equipment is a telephone
3 switch, and

4 wherein said step of operating calling
5 equipment includes:

6 operating the telephone switch to initiate a
7 first call to said user using the first telephone number;

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8 operating the telephone switch to initiate a
9 second call to said customer service representative using
10 the second telephone number; and

11 operating the telephone switch to bridge the
12 first and second calls.

1 10. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps
2 of:

3 assigning, in response to the received message,
4 one of a plurality of customer service representatives to
5 service said user; and

6 sending information associated with said user
7 to a computer system associated with the assigned
8 customer service representative.

1 11. The method of claim 10, wherein sending information
2 associated with said user includes:

3 transmitting said information over the Internet
4 to the computer system associated with the assigned
5 customer service representative.

1 12. The method of claim 10, wherein sending information
2 associated with said user includes:

3 transmitting said information over a local area
4 network to the computer system associated with the
5 assigned customer service representative.

1 13. The method of claim 10, further comprising the step
2 of:

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3 receiving sales information from the customer
4 service representative.

1 14. The method of claim 13, wherein the computer
2 associated with the customer service representative is
3 located at the customer service representative's
4 residence.

1 15. The method of claim 13, further comprising the step
2 of:

3 supplying, over the Internet, to a computer
4 system associated with said user a web page including a
5 button which can be activated to initiate the
6 transmission of a call request message over the Internet.

1 16. A method of using a computer coupled to the
2 Internet, the method comprising:

3 operating the computer to retrieve from the
4 Internet a web page including a button which can be
5 activated by a user of the computer to request a call
6 from a customer service representative;

7 operating the computer to display said web page
8 to said user;

9 operating the computer to detect activation of
10 said button by the user; and

11 in response to activation of said button,

12 i. generating a call request message; and

13 ii. transmitting the call request message
14 over the Internet.

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1 17. The method of claim 16,
2 wherein the step of transmitting the call
3 request message is performed as a function of an address
4 information obtained from said web page; and
5 wherein generating a call request message
6 includes incorporating into the call request message, a
7 telephone number associated with said user.

1 18. The method of claim 17, wherein generating a call
2 request message further includes:
3 incorporating into the call request message,
4 web page information obtained from the web page and
5 desired contact time information.

1 19. The method of claim 18, wherein generating a call
2 request message further includes:
3 incorporating into the call request message
4 customer service representative information.

1 20. The method of claim 19, wherein the customer service
2 representative information includes a customer service
3 telephone number.

1 21. A method of operating telephone equipment, the
2 method comprising the steps of:
3 receiving a message transmitted using TCP/IP
4 including call set-up information, the set-up information
5 including a telephone number of a customer and a
6 telephone number of a customer service representative,

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7 operating the telephone equipment to establish
8 a first call with the customer;
9 operating the telephone equipment to establish
10 a second call with the customer service representative;
11 and
12 bridging the first and second calls.

1 22. The method of claim 21, wherein the first call is
2 established prior to the second call, the method further
3 comprising the step of:
4 playing the customer a message while
5 establishing the second call.

1 23. A method of providing customer service to a user of
2 the Internet, the method comprising the steps of:
3 receiving a message over the Internet
4 requesting a call from a customer service representative;
5 and
6 establishing over the Internet, in response to
7 said received message, a call between said user and a
8 customer service representative, said established call
9 including a voice over IP connection with at least one of
10 said user and said customer service representative.

1 24. The method of claim 23, further comprising the step
2 of:
3 assigning a customer service representative to
4 respond to said received message; and

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5 transmitting a first IP address associated with
6 said user and a IP address associated with the assigned
7 customer service representative to said calling
8 equipment.

1 25. A communication system, comprising:

2 a Web server for receiving a message over the
3 Internet requesting a call from a customer service
4 representative; and

5 calling equipment coupled to said Web server
6 for establishing a call between said user and a customer
7 service representative, in response to said received
8 message.

1 26. The communication system of claim 25, wherein said
2 calling equipment includes:

3 an intelligent peripheral device; and
4 a telephone switch coupled to the intelligent
5 peripheral device.

1 27. The communication system of claim 25, wherein said
2 calling equipment includes:

3 a telephone switch with an interface for
4 receiving messages from the Internet.

1 28. The communication system of claim 25, wherein the
2 Web server is a computer for interfacing with the
3 Internet and wherein the calling equipment is a telephone
4 switch.

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1 29. The communication system of claim 25, wherein the
2 calling equipment is a voice over IP communications
3 system.

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